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Facilitator Report Greenville, NC City Council Planning Session January 27-28, 2017

Setting Priorities & Providing Direction

This report summarizes the outcome of presentations to, discussions among and priority-setting exercises by Greenville City Council members with the objective of providing direction to the City Manager and staff. The intent of the planning session was not to make final commitments or decisions on any topic.



Summary

The planning session provided information and sought direction from City Council members in four basic categories: 1. General Fund budget forecast; 2. “Pay As You Go” use of General Fund revenues to pay for some capital projects; 3. Long-Term Capital Debt Planning and prioritization of identified capital projects; and 4. “Big Ideas” for future development of capital projects. The amount of detailed information available, the degree of certainty about the likelihood of individual items coming to fruition as planned, the confidence in cost estimates and the timing of project start and completion decreases quite substantially from items identified in the “Pay As You Go” category (likely to occur as presented during the planning session) to the “Big Ideas” presentations (which still require a high degree of information and refinement before detailed proposals may be discussed and decided by City Council.)

The planning session began on Friday afternoon, January 27th with a presentation by the Office of Economic Development highlighting the City’s overarching economic development strategy and plan, as well as a more detailed review of retail strategies, the Imperial Site Redevelopment and new action items for 2017. In response to the Imperial Site Redevelopment presentation made by Jordan Jones of DFI, several Council members expressed concern about specific components of the redevelopment plan. Mr. Jones specifically acknowledged and noted the concerns and confirmed he would take the concerns and objections raised into account as further refinement of the redevelopment plan takes place. The economic development presentation was followed by a discussion during which consensus was sought and given by Council members for the Office of Economic Development to continue in the directions on which they had embarked.

The planning session reconvened on Saturday morning, January 28th with a presentation and discussion about the General Fund Budget Forecast for FY 2017-18, followed by an overview of long-term capital debt planning (10 years) and a priority-setting exercise to re-examine previously established possible projects. Of note from the budget forecast was information that 62% of the City’s general fund expenditures were for human resources. An issue that will require closer examination is the rate of increase in general fund expenses, particularly resulting from escalating human resources costs, which is exceeding the rate of revenue growth. The divergence in the rate of growth between expenditures and revenues is clearly an issue that will require City Council attention in the future.

After an easily arrived at consensus by City Council members that the direction and plan outlined in the general fund presentation, which included a ten-year plan to “Pay As You Go” for certain identified projects, attention turned to setting priorities for long-term capital projects. A detailed review of the process and results of the long-term capital projects priority-setting exercise follows.



Setting Priorities & Providing Direction

Established Goals & Priorities

At previously held planning sessions, as well as during normal Council deliberations and budgeting processes, Council established 8 goals and 10 priorities for the City of Greenville. Those goals and priorities are itemized in the sidebar on the right side of this page, below.

City staff presented information pertaining to projects completed, underway or being planned within these previously established goals and priorities. The estimated cost of each identified project, the cost-share for each project by source of funds (e.g. – Greenville, State, Federal, Other) was also provided for each project. The Greenville cost share for all projects is approximately, \$43.2 million of nearly \$190 million in total project costs. At the conclusion of the presentation, City Council members were asked for consensus to continue pursuing these goals and priorities without change. No concerns or objections were raised to continuing with the established goals and priorities for planning purposes. As a result, the remainder of the planning session took place with the understanding that the overarching goals and priorities would serve as guidance in providing direction to City staff about specific project priorities.

Additionally, City staff presented information highlighting possible funding mechanisms for the Greenville share of capital improvement projects over the next 10 years. Those funding mechanisms for specific projects or groups of projects included options to “Pay As You Go” from general funds, to installment payments, to issuing voter approved bonds.

Established City Council Goals & Priorities



Goals

- A. Building Great Places That Thrive
- B. Enhancing Accessible Transportation Networks
- C. Governing With Transparency & Fiscal Responsibility
- D. Growing the Economic Hub of Eastern N.C.
- E. Create Complete Neighborhoods
- F. Growing a Green and Resilient City
- G. Making a Healthy and Vibrant City
- H. Safe Community: Police and Fire/Rescue

Priorities

- 1. Town Common- Do the Whole Thing
- 2. Farmer's / Organic Market
- 3. Long-Term Debt Strategy
- 4. River Access / Tar River Vantage Points
- 5. Tar River Legacy Plan Additions
- 6. Virtual Building
- 7. Red Light Cameras
- 8. Lighting- LED
- 9. Arts Coalition
- 10. Southside Police Precinct



Providing Direction

The underlying purpose for asking City Council members to provide more and clearer direction about which projects to prioritize is to most efficiently use City staff time and resources. As was presented during the planning session, 62% of all general fund expenses for the City of Greenville are human resource costs. With human resources both the largest portion of the budget, as well as the most important asset of the City, it is vital for City Council to provide direction about priorities in order to most effectively and efficiently spend limited resources.

Working with a previously identified list of projects to be undertaken that coincide with one or more of the established goals or priorities for the City of Greenville, City Council members were asked to evaluate each project in relation to the priority they would assign it in relation to all other projects. A list of the identified projects to be prioritized is provided in the sidebar on the right side of this page.

Each Council member received 9 sticky dots (3 green dots each valued at 3 points; 3 yellow dots each valued at 2 points; and 3 red dots each valued at 1 point) with which to designate their individual priorities. Green dots denoted

the highest relative priority. Each Council member was asked to affix one or more dots next to an identified project to provide direction to City staff about how staff time and City resources ought to be expended to further explore and develop each specific project. The total points attained by the various projects determined the priority order, and therefore, direction given by Council to City staff to gather further information, develop more detailed costs and funding models, and present details of if, how and when to move forward with each project at future City Council meetings. After more detailed

Possible Projects



Town Common Development

- Sycamore Hill Memorial
- Other Town Common Development

Transportation Related Projects

- Evans Street Widening
- 14th Street Widening
- Firetower Road Widening
- Firetower/Portertown Road Widening
- Allen Road Widening
- Dickenson Avenue Improvement
- Street Light Installation (Various Streets)
- Traffic Signal System Upgrade (Citywide)

Greenway Projects

- Town Common to River Park North
- Green Mill Run to Eastside Park
- Pitt Street to Nash Street
- Nash Street to VA hospital

Tar River Legacy Plan & Park Development

- Tar River Legacy Plan
- Eastside Park
- River's Edge Park
- Southwest Park
- South Central Area Park
- Greenfield Terrace Park Expansion

Public Safety Projects

- Southside Fire Station

Economic Development Projects

- TBD



information is provided, the final approvals to move forward with any individual project will occur in the normal budget process and/or at future City Council meetings.

Priority Projects

At the start of the priority setting exercise, Council members were invited to add any projects or opportunities to the existing list that they would like their colleagues to consider as a priority item, in addition to those already identified.

One possible project was added to the existing list. This project was identified as “Skate Park/BMX” and described as a legacy to the contribution of the late Dave Mirra to the community and the sport. In addition to being a recreational facility, it was described as a potential economic development project.

The exercise resulted in the identification of 16 prioritized projects, from the original list of 22 projects (1 project was added to the original list, for a total of 23). In the order of the highest to lowest point total obtained (total points attained are in parenthesis), the results of the exercise are shown in the sidebar on the right side of this page, above.

It’s important to clarify that although some projects did not receive votes, while others were ranked high or low, this exercise was designed to help City staff set priorities for the expenditure of staff resources in developing further details for plans to carry-out all 23 of the projects identified. Council review and approval of each project will be sought in the regular course of City Council business at future dates. After submittal of the report by the facilitator, the City Manager’s office felt that it is important to advise the City Council that 7 of the 23 presented projects did not receive priority votes but are still priorities as they have funding or are part of other ongoing projects that will require staff time and work. These projects include the Firetower Road Widening, Firetower/Portertown Road Widening, Allen Road Widening, Pitt Street to Nash Street improvements, South West Park development, South Central Area Park development, Parking Lot development for Sidewalk project and City Employees. A full listing of all of the projects prioritized is included at the end of this report.

Project Rankings



1. Southside Fire Station (15)
2. Sycamore Hill Memorial (13)
2. Street Light Installation (Various Streets) (13)
4. Dickenson Avenue Improvement (10)
4. Town Common to River Park North (10)
4. Eastside Park (10)
7. Other Town Common Development (9)
8. Tar River Legacy Plan (7)
9. Skate Park/BMX (6)
10. River’s Edge Park (5)
11. 14th Street Widening (3)
12. Traffic Signal System Upgrade (Citywide) (2)
12. Nash Street to VA hospital (2)
12. Greenfield Terrace Park Expansion (2)
15. Evans Street Widening (1)
15. Green Mill Run to Eastside Park (1)



Exploring Future Possibilities

“Big Ideas”

The latter part of the City Council Planning Session on Saturday was reserved for presentation and discussion of a variety of themes or possibilities that are in the early or concept stage. In addition to the Friday evening topic regarding the Imperial Site Redevelopment, other possibilities presented, considered and discussed included the items in the sidebar on the right.

At the conclusion of the presentation and discussion of all of the “Big Ideas” possibilities, each City Council member received 3 sticky dots

(1 green dot valued at 3 points; 1 yellow dot valued at 2 points; and 1 red dot valued at 1 point) with which to designate their individual priorities. Green dots denoted the highest relative priority. Each Council member was asked to affix one or more dots next to a “Big Ideas” project to provide direction to City staff about how staff time and City resources ought to be expended to further explore and develop each specific project. The total points attained by the various projects determined the priority order, and therefore, direction given by Council to City staff to gather further information or develop more specific information, including cost estimates, funding models, and other relevant facts to present

“Big Ideas”

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- Coastal Plain Baseball League
- Commercial/Industrial Site
- Disney Imagineering/STEAM Project
- Imperial Site:
 - Public Improvements
 - Parking Deck
- Sports Destination Projects:
 - Natatorium
 - Indoor Court Facility
 - Triangle Field Complex
- Thomas Langston Road to Greenville Blvd Extension
- Town Common Pedestrian Bridge

“Big Ideas” Rankings

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1. Sidewalk Imagineering/STEAM Project (12)
2. Commercial/Industrial Site (10)
3. Town Common Pedestrian Bridge (8)
4. Sports Destination Projects: (7)
 - a. Triangle Field Complex (5)
 - b. Indoor Court Facility (2)
5. Coastal Plain Baseball League (5)

to City Council at future dates for further consideration of if, how and when to proceed with any of the ideas. The ranked results of the prioritization exercise (with the points obtained by each idea in parenthesis) is shown in the sidebar on the left side of this page.

Again, it’s important to clarify that although some projects did not receive votes, while others were ranked high or low, this exercise was designed to help City staff set priorities in developing information about the “big ideas” presented. City Council review, specific direction and possible approval of projects stemming from proposed ideas will be sought in the future.



Concluding Observations

Facilitator Thoughts and Recommendations

The various presentations were informative and thorough. Ample time was allotted for the subsequent discussions and resulting questions. The atmosphere and tenor of the planning session was informal, respectful and collegial. No one seemed reluctant to express their concerns or viewpoints. These factors were critical to the high level of productivity for the planning session. As to be expected, City Council members often had differing views and priorities with regard to the relative importance or priority of a project or about the details or components of a specific project or proposal presented. Nonetheless, Council members had a remarkable degree of consensus on the broad direction City staff were given to pursue projects or ideas further.

As was evident throughout the planning session, the City of Greenville enjoys many advantages and opportunities but also faces a number of challenges. Several proposals to meet the City's opportunities and challenges were presented, discussed and prioritized. City staff has been provided clear direction and has had Council priorities reaffirmed or set for the first time. These should serve as unambiguous guidance to the City Manager and senior staff in determining the day-to-day allocation of personnel time and other resources to gather the needed information for Council members to debate and decide specific options in a well-informed manner.

While Council has provided staff with some direction on the priorities, it must be clearly noted and understood that there are some ongoing activities that, although they may not have been identified as priorities in the "Big Ideas" portion of the exercise, will still be ongoing projects. An example is the continuing work to progress with plans for the Imperial Site. In addition, it must be recognized that these items may not be completed within a year and will be balanced or worked-on within existing day to day priorities

As more specific information is developed, it will be incumbent on City staff to apprise Council of progress in a timely fashion and to seek further direction or decisions for action expeditiously.



Full Listing of Projects Considered

1. Sycamore Hill Memorial
2. Other Town Common Development
3. Evans Street Widening Project
4. 14th Street Widening Project
5. Firetower Road Widening Project
6. Firetower/Portertown Road Widening Project
7. Allen Road Widening Project
8. Dickinson Avenue Improvements
9. Street Light Installation (various streets)
10. Traffic Signal System Upgrade (Citywide)
11. Town Common to River Park North
12. Green Mill Run to Eastside Park
13. Pitt Street to Nash Street
14. Nash Street to VA Hospital
15. Tar River Legacy Plan Projects
16. Eastside Park
17. Rivers Edge Park
18. Southwest Park
19. South Central Area Park
20. Greenfield Terrace Park Expansion
21. Southside Fire Station
22. Parking Lots: Sidewalk Development/City Employees
23. Skate Park